

# 53 Craft As Activism

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## Abstract

Craft activists work outside the mainstream of consumer society, in grass-roots efforts, to create social change that positions individuals and groups of people as reflective contributors who occupy a participatory democracy. These activities connect to and draw from feminist and other civil rights movements, sustainability, and do-it-yourself [DIY] activities. They are forms of affective labor. The crafted products are considered in terms of whether they contribute (or do not) to the surplus economy, in terms of class taste, and vis-à-vis their ability to connect people and contribute to social change. Education of craft activists and audiences takes informal forms, such as websites, books, and public acts related to culture jamming.

## Introduction

Craftivism. Church of Craft. Stitch 'n Bitch. Handmade Nation. Revolutionary Knitting Circle. Anarchist Knitting Mob. Yarn bombing. Red Sweaters Project. Extremecraft.com. Crafts for Critters. Knittaplease. Craft Hope. Anti-factory.com. Microrevolt. Wombs on Washington. Body count mittens. These groups and projects—a mere sampling of knitters, sewers, crocheters, embroiderers, printers, bookmakers, zinemakers, recyclers, and other self-designated “crafters”—are activist craft positioned outside the mainstream of late capitalist consumer society.<sup>i</sup> “Making your own clothes, your own dinnerware, your own art has become a way to politely (or maybe not so politely)” turn your back on corporate consumption, argues *American Craft* magazine editor Andrew Wagner (2008, p. 1). It is “a reaction against a whole slew of things, including our hyper-fast culture, increasing reliance on digital technology, the proliferation of consumer culture, and even war,” he continues (p. 1). “The crafted object as old-fashioned or traditional has now been eschewed in favor of crafting as a strategy to examine and challenge contemporary issues” (Black & Burisch, 2010, p. 610). The politics range from groups wanting to influence policies, raise funds, or increase awareness of a cause to those making cultural interventions into daily or street life (Bratich & Brush, 2011, p. 249). Craft activism is also sometimes referred to as “alternative craft” (Metcalf, 2008) or “craftivism” (Greer, 2011; Robertson, 2011; Black & Burisch, 2011).

But what is craft, and why craft? “Craft is a way to connect with people, a way to create a community that you are inspired by,” begins Faythe Levine in the foreword to *Craft Activism* (2011, p. 5). “Making things” is a phrase that she uses, along with Rachel Mason, in her extensive work on craft education in the UK (Mason, 1998). Making connects to a fundamental human need (Dissanayake, 1992). Levine ties making to mental and physical focus, and to personal pride: “When the fad passes, we will still be making. Because making things by hand has never stopped, and it will never disappear” (p. 5). Rather than defining craft as certain media or processes, it is this idea of “making things” that is operant here. Craft and making are more democratic, culturally speaking, than art, but this definition does not preclude art. They are more democratic because many people are engaged in them, often without extensive training, making “making” accessible to most who have the inclination. Many crafted items are often part of gift exchange, and often functional, connecting them to daily life. Many of them result in gestures of caring: covers from the cold, for example. Craft and making are often learned informally—from a friend or relative, from books or on-line sources or experimentation, from a community education site such as a craft store or a community center or a group of like-minded learners (such as a knitting circle). Craft making often forms the basis of a community, be it a quilting bee, a knitting circle, a group of yarn bombers (see Endnote 1), or an Internet blog. These are a few reasons why the connection between crafts and activism is currently strong.

Craft making (including but not limited to craft activism) manifests in a number of arenas, from market commodities, to documentaries, to anti-capitalist craft (Bratich, 2010). What is addressed in this paper is this last realm of “anti-capitalist and anti-authoritarian craftivist projects” (p. 304) because they are a recognizable form of grass-roots activism, connect to social theories of interest to art and visual culture educators, and involve the informal education of makers and viewers.

## Connections

Craft activism is a species of do-it-yourself (DIY) culture that is tied to using available resources to create something to share with others. The roots of DIY are in using lo-fi, available resources, and in people crossing the boundary between consumption and creation to exchange ideas, information, images, music, or goods. “The primary aim is to build unique idealized networks in which anyone can participate . . . members of the DIY underground aren’t ‘fixated with the promise of money, they are people who want to do something just to see it happen’” (Michael Cupid as quoted in Spencer, 2005, p. 11). In addition to craft and art, DIY is a notable arena in film, music, writing and publishing, and politics.

Craft activism, as much DIY, can be understood both as an occupation and a way of life that involves participatory or substantive democracy (Macpherson, 1962, 1973; Torres, 1998; Garber, 2005) in which socially equal and reflective individuals contribute to building “a sense of community, of association, of neighboring and joining” (Torres, pp. 146-147).<sup>ii</sup> Craft activism engages participatory making where democratic processes are valued. Craft activism occupies spaces within individuals’ lives, but moreover in local communities, engaging a “human microphone” of makers and viewers directly in participatory democracy. For activist crafters, such making is a way of life, a way of voicing and participating, of expressing, and of raging that reaches a public directly, sometimes drawing them in.

For example, knitters from Europe, the UK, and the USA contributing to Marianne Jørgensen’s *Pink Tank* made over 4,000 knitted squares as part of a protest against the war in Iraq. Together the squares created a covering for a World War II combat tank that was displayed publicly. Knitted by many different people using varied patterns, designs, types of yarn, and shades of pink, *Pink Tank* helped to convey a sense of the wide breadth of people opposed to the war in Iraq, noted the artist (Jørgensen, n.d., n.p.). (To see a photograph of *Pink Tank*, please visit [www.marianneart.dk](http://www.marianneart.dk)). When *Pink Tank* was exhibited in front of downtown Copenhagen’s Nikolaj Contemporary Art Center, formal volunteers as well as passersby helped sew together the squares. “The possibility of ‘knitting your opinions’ gives the project an aspect I think is important,” reflects Jørgensen (n.p.). The voices and suggestions of individuals involved are part of many activist craft organizations, meaning that there isn’t an imposed hierarchical leadership. Activist craft is “counter to dominant notions of the placid individual crafter . . . Crafting here is a social movement and a form of direct action, whose current work is prefiguring a world to come” (Bratich & Brush, 2007, p. 22). This doesn’t mean that an individual never works alone, but that s/he understands her/his work as contributing to and building the values of participatory democracy.

Although Bourriaud doesn’t engage craft in the many examples he develops, activist craft is related to his idea of “relational aesthetics.” He talks about relational art as “a dot on a line,” where the art object is subsidiary to the participation that surrounds it (2002, p. 21). As an example, artist Rirkrit Tiravanija has remarked on the display of bowls, vases, and teapots made for use and now in museum displays. “I decided to find a way, to address this issue of use or misuse by reusing it. So I would say that by reusing it basically means to take that antique bowl and put food in it—put life back into it” (Rirkrit Tiravanija as quoted in Bao & Carey, 2004, n.p.), which is what he did in his *Untitled (Free/Still)*, first shown in 1992 and last reshowed earlier in 2012 at MoMA. “A Tiravanija show,” argues Bourriaud, “does not dodge materialization, but deconstructs the methods of making the art object into a series of events” (p. 54). Tiravanija is focused on the interaction, on learning “what conviviality

and sharing mean" (p. 70). The readymade pots, chairs, tables, and food, for example, support people coming together and conversing, actions that are the centerpiece of his work. Tiravanija's art that stimulates building dialogue and community is similar to what Church of Craft founder Callie Janoff says of craft activism, that "The acts of making and getting together [are] more important than the products made" (2008, p. 57). In the last fifty years of art when concept over product has been theoretically foregrounded, these acknowledgements of the role of a material object in building towards social change should not be overlooked. They are "dots" on a line, indeed, but remembering that mathematically a line is a moving point (or dot), they make a real contribution.

Affectively, there are pleasures in making and completing and in the use of the senses. "What is most important about craftwork is the quality of being *affective* labor . . . where labor finds its value in *affect*, where affect is defined as primarily the power to act" rather than thinking of the product or capital as what makes value (Bratich & Brush, 2007, p. 3; italics in original). Affective labor "is itself and directly the constitution of communities and collective subjectivities" (p. 3). On an "everyday level, craftivists develop values and practices like mentorship, community-building, connection with other DIY projects, and gender empowerment . . . as a politicized practice of resourcefulness, local knowledge, and nonhierarchical organizational forms" (p. 22). That labor is also "immaterial," a term Lazzarato (1995) uses to refer to the contributions that some types of labor develop in the creation of cultural (as well as informational) content, such as tastes, cultural concepts, and opinions. "Craft-work as affective production allows us to think about value differently. Untied from capitalist valorization, craft-work produces communities and subjectivity laterally and contains an autonomous circuit of meaning and relationships" (Bratich, 2010, p. 309). Bratich further suggests that craft making as a gift-giving practice, a form of care, and a form of information exchange (talking in the knitting circle, teaching someone a new skill) is immaterial labor. In addition to the material outcome, craftivism develops mentorship, builds community, and contributes to personal as well as gender empowerment.

Craft activism speaks to sustainability when the knitter unravels a thrift shop sweater to make a new one, or doesn't support a sweatshop and the corporations that put it on our shelves. It's more than "creative reuse" (Johnson, 2009), although reuse is part of it. As Johnson points out, Duchamp reused extant objects and materials in his readymades, conceptually challenging the definition of art. The history of reuse includes the melting of bronze statues by the ancient Greeks to make more naturalistic ones, Romans' reuse of decorative elements from old buildings to make the Arch of Constantine, medieval scribes' reuse of parchment for manuscripts, the use of architectural and decorative elements from ancient Babylonian sites in medieval Baghdad, and the Spanish dismantling of Aztec temples to build colonial buildings in Mexico City. "The reuse of materials meant different things to different cultures," argues Johnson (p. 8), who suggests three types of reuse: dominance of one culture over another, homage to another culture, and thrift. Craft activists sometimes incorporate these references, but their real theme is some type of social change as suggested by Wagner's (2008) remark that activist craft is about eschewing the capitalist economy. Sustainability is not at play in all activist craft (would that it were, from my perspective), but an important part of much of it.

Craft activism's roots are also in feminism and struggles for civil rights. Rozsika Parker (1984) recounts the historical shaping of femininity through needle arts in her well-known study of women's embroidery, *The Subversive Stitch*, as well as the ways that the stitchers

worked through embroidery to express ideas and sentiments that were not permitted women. There are many other studies of the cultural link between women's work and craft. Nineteenth century African-American quilters famously stitched Underground Railroad routes into their quilts. Craft activism again brings to light the public/private sphere important to early work on women's lives. In the current sphere, the appearance of domesticity in popular culture, on public sites, and circulating on the social web are instances of what Railla calls "the new domesticity" (2004, n.p.). What has traditionally happened in the home, such as crafts, takes on a public face (Bratich, 2010), reclaiming women's formerly private spaces (that Bratich and Brush [2011] argue were never constrained to the home) in a way that "reweaves the old itself" (p. 238).<sup>iii</sup>

In *The Aftermath of Feminism*, Angela McRobbie (2009) talks about "illegible rage" developing in young women because they are told they are equal and therefore sexual politics are no longer necessary, yet they are still encountering situations that suggest they are evaluated and treated differently. I have suggested that some women's activities work outside this social system that coopts women as consumers while maintaining a gender hierarchy. In a personal interview with Norma Bates, a Milwaukee roller girl (or player), I learned,

the real power [of roller derby] lies in the social and financial network we have created . . . I buy skates from a roller girl. I get my hair cut from a roller girl. I order pizza from a roller girl. My vet is a referee. My barista is a beerleader. My massage therapist is a volunteer. Everywhere there is a roller derby team, derby girls are turning to other derby girls to cater their parties, file their taxes, walk their dogs, trade their stocks, fix their cars, rehab their knees and plan their funerals. (Garber & Garber-Pearson, 2012, p. 99)

In other words, many women and men in DIY movements such as activist craft challenge gender hierarchy and the social *status quo* through their actions.

Bratich & Brush (2007) argue that the outcomes of craft activism are closely linked to how we understand gender in the current climate of rethinking communities, spaces, and labor. Philosopher Rosi Braidotti (1994, 2002, 2006) develops a Deleuze and Irigaray-influenced description of feminism that focuses on what she calls "nomadic subjectivity," which she defines as "a strategy to undo the many, localized, 'hard core' identities that continue to be perpetuated in our globalized world" (Braidotti as quoted in LaFountain, 2008, n.p.). She speaks particularly to identities reified by the binary of male and female. Using Deleuze's challenge to the idea of a single, unified subject, she focuses on productivities that are disembodied and not the outcome of a unified subject acting. Braidotti seems to be applying this brand of feminism to political activism in cultural forms that are rhizomatic in nature. She suggests creating new kinds of female feminist subjects (not necessarily girls or women but rather undesignated subjects, nomadic and ungendered gangs) who are interested in transformation through marginal practices and cultural activities. In desiring transformation, she might, as McRobbie (2009) suggests, come close to a re-invention of self "according to the intensified logic of consumer culture" (p. 162), but the desire that Braidotti builds on is one for alternatives that suggest the potential for transformation in marginal cultural practices. While this position can certainly be criticized as accounting for persons already informed by feminism and other alternative strategies for progressive social change, and as drawing from an educated, westernized, middle-class understanding of subjectivity (McRobbie, pp. 160-169), it posits a position of possibility and action from

which at least some subjects, of whatever gender or other identity—fixed or in transition, can work. This is the possibility and hope that craft activism is part of, along with other grass-roots practices for voice, sustainability, and community forms of goods and service exchange. Feminist practices underlie what craft activists are doing, but feminism isn't always acknowledged, and craft activists don't feel obliged to connect themselves explicitly to feminism. But neither do all of them self-label as environmentalists or even activists.

### Product

Still, some of this craft stuff gives me the hives. Plush houses with eyes to hang on the wall? Fabric donuts?? Clothespin people with polymer heads??? Cute little animals melted into tiles of glass? Handmade books with little girls and watering cans? The concept as well as the word “craft” has horrible connotations,” remark J.W. and Melissa Buchanan, who run “The Little Friends of Printmaking.” “The word besmirches work that is really important” (Buchanan & Buchanan, 2008, p. 60). I agree. What is it that differentiates a range of sock dolls on Etsy.com from a Halloween umbrella-cum-bat craft project presented on Martha Stewart,<sup>iv</sup> from tagging street signs with knitted wraps ([www.knittaplease.com](http://www.knittaplease.com)), from Margarita Cabrera's soft sculptures of domestic appliances that comment on the US economy's partial reliance on Mexican maquiladoras ([www.margaritacabrera.com](http://www.margaritacabrera.com))? Or any of these from Jean Shin's *Umbrellas Stripped Bare*? And from Lacey Jane Roberts' *The Queer Houses of Brooklyn* quilt and her woven fences, such as *Building It Up to Tear It Down* ([laceyaneroberts.com](http://laceyaneroberts.com))?

The sock dolls, clothespin people, and fabric donuts are part of the surplus materials economy that caters to consumption. An umbrella-to-bat craft project suggests recycling, and engages the consumer in making rather than consuming. I could argue that it is tied up with some of the motivations of sock dolls and clothespin people in celebrating traditions and making what many might consider tasteless “kitsch” in large part because it relates to the economy of “cute” but am rebuffed in remembering a quote from Daniel Harris' *Cute, Quaint, Hungry and Romantic*, that “Jeremiads against consumerism . . . [make] contemptuous appraisals of the ugliness and vulgarity of capitalism [that] are in fact simply covert attacks on the bad taste of the lower classes . . . [and] based on an unaccountably dour disapproval of creature comforts” (2000, p. xv). Tagging street signs suggests a culture of taking action to counter consumerism that is part of a social movement for change raging against the corporate machine. Lacey Roberts' *Queer Houses* quilt makes a statement about alternative lifestyles of support and caring. More important to understand about craft activism is that its practitioners value “the radical potential” of an activity over the actual object (Black & Burisch, 2010, p. 610). The focus, as well as the making, is conceptual and communal. “This emphasis has made room for reconsiderations of crafts(wo)manship, performativity, mindfulness, tacit knowledge, skill sharing, DIY, anti-capitalism and activism” (p. 610).

Maybe all of these differences can be argued as a class issue. But there's something more at work. Art works, argues Bourriaud (2002), are set apart from other human objects and activities by their “(relative) social transparency. If a work of art is successful, it will invariably set its sights beyond its mere presence in space: it will be open to dialogue, discussion, and that form of inter-human negotiation that Marcel Duchamp called ‘the coefficient of art’” (p. 41; parentheses in original). Bourriaud also talks about the relative uselessness of art to *do* something (such as cover, contain, or support, Risatti's [2007] three characteristics of craft), although it is part of a system of exchange. Some activist craft meets

this description: yarn bombed trees and street signs, for example, but not quilts or beanies sent to charities. But maybe not doing something isn't really the point. The real emphasis that Bourriaud suggests, when he states that what artists produce is "first and foremost . . . relations between people and the world" (p. 42), is that art has to do with relationships, and this is one of the chief motivators for craft activism.

These distinctions don't mean that other forms of (not activist) craft are to be dismissed or left on the bottom of art and cultural hierarchies. "We can still cherish our handmade sweaters, mittens, or quilts as winter wear and warm coverings for a bed. And we can marvel at an exquisite woven rug hanging in a gallery as a piece of purely decorative art" (Tapper, 2011, p. 9). We can still enjoy making as part of holiday traditions or slow culture<sup>v</sup>. Activist craft, however, is distinct from these better-known craft traditions in intent, message, and use.

### Education

Craft activism involves education of makers and viewers in a way of life that ties making something to political expression and active involvement in a participatory democracy. It is generally a peer-to-peer education, with teaching taking place in person, or through books and the Internet. It further involves self-education, in learning how as well as re-thinking why one makes something and for whom s/he makes it.

Craft Hope started with a call for dresses made from pillowcases to be sent to a children's shelter in Mexico. Founder Jade Sims posted a basic pattern on a blog. Next, she called for cloth dolls for a Nicaraguan orphanage. Burp cloths, crib sheets, sock monkeys, quilts, beanies for preemies, and other items followed, with children to college students to elders contributing and suggesting items to be made. In her book *Craft Hope*, Sims (2010) provides instructions for 32 craft projects, each linked with a charity that needs the item: soap for women's shelters; beanies for cancer patients; pillowcase skirts for refugee children along the Thai border. These are preceded by suggestions for giving, such as making items that the recipient needs and can use over a period of time, making things well, and considering symbolism. She additionally provides a list of nonprofit organizations that could be contacted to inquire about needs, but encourages giving locally. Beyond these principles, she sets some basic contexts for empowerment through giving that involve not only material goods and money to meet immediate needs but committing to finding ways to help individuals and communities take care of their own needs. "A book tote is a thoughtful gift to give someone who is learning to read," she remarks, "but if you also became that person's literacy tutor, you could make an incredible difference in his or her life" (Sims, p. 13). Craft Hope could be understood merely as a gift-giving charity that satisfies the givers' making needs, but the organization is also an example of a type of informal education, for Sims' book educates her readers not only about how to make things but also about how to set up meaningful gifting.

In an exploration of home-decorating magazines, Lara Lackey (2005) argues that they teach art overtly by giving instruction about interior design or crafts as well as through implied values about the way a home should look. The context of such education

may be viewed as the full set of conditions and circumstances—material, structural/organizational, ideological, overtly stated and tacitly understood—that people take into account, and with which they interact

as they proceed in learning . . . . While the context does not fully impose or restrict our choices and behavior, we negotiate within context as we decide on our options and grow to understand what is expected, valued, and appropriate within a given arena. (p. 326)

The plethora of books, magazines, and websites on craft, and on craft activism in particular, provides not only a community of learners but also a set of values, choices, and behaviors that informs that learning. Voicing beliefs, making for social or political causes, preserving the environment through upcycling (or using already-used materials as a material), eschewing the system of corporate manufacturing, promoting local labor and regional goods are values implied in books such as *Craft Activism* (Tapper, 2011), *Craft Hope* (Sims, 2010), *Eco-Craft* (Wasinger, 2009) and websites such as [craftivism.com](http://craftivism.com), [jaffagirls.com](http://jaffagirls.com), [bagsforthepeople.org](http://bagsforthepeople.org), [microrevolt.org](http://microrevolt.org) (and many others).

The quilt *Crying the Blues* conveyed its makers' (all women who were seniors) concerns about social issues: social cuts, social equity imbalance, hospital closures, housing costs, health care, privatization of schooling and the cost of university education, attacks on labor costs, rising living costs, war and violence, and environmental degradation (Clover, 2005). These were the everyday concerns of the makers. Traveling across British Columbia, the quilt educated audiences about the experience of being elderly in North America, much as Suzanne Lacy's performances *Crystal Quilt* and *Whisper, the Waves, the Wind*<sup>vi</sup> incorporated references to quilting patterns. *Crying the Blues* responded to the makers' and audiences' feelings about being elderly as well as to social issues that arose under Canada's neo-liberal government. It also educated the makers themselves in building their ability to engage collectively in social issues that affected them, a type of education through doing.

Craft activism speaks to culture jamming, described by Sandlin and Milam (2010) as "the act of resisting and recreating commercial culture in an effort to transform society . . . [as] created and enacted in our daily lives" (p. 250). Culture jamming resists hyperconsumption and commercialism in favor of using intermediary spaces to build relationships between our inner selves and the people, objects, and places that surround us. Craft activists employ culture jamming when they engage dialogically with everyday materials and experiences to engage in critical citizenship (Tavin, 2010), acts that build participatory democracy. Culture jammers educate themselves and those who interface with their work when they "interrogate and expose ideological forces embedded within our everyday" (Darts, 2004, p. 323) and when they reflectively engage in cultural production that challenges the *status quo* of consumer culture. Using these parameters, craft activists are by default involved in education through culture jamming: education of themselves and others.

## Conclusion

Maxine Greene (1995) argues for the importance of imagination in building consciousness and imagining "new forms of civic association and collaboration" (p. 6). Craft activists investigate and educate themselves and others in ways that imaginatively empower, deepen understandings of living and directing one's own life, promote respect for diversity, build community, and engage makers in a participatory democracy.

Skilled or not, beauty, kitsch, and taste aside, what attracts me to the craft activism movement is that it brings together a social commitment to change that was present in earlier feminist art, that is present in eco-art, in community art, and in art that engages



spectator participation—from Fluxus to the Situationists to Tucson Arts Brigade to Rirkrit Tiravanija. It makes do, as de Certeau (1984) might say, resisting and opposing the dominant paradigm. Craft activists are women and men whose art and actions occupy spaces in a participatory democracy and activate spaces for social change.

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## Endnotes

<sup>i</sup> Craftivism describes the link between craft and activism that is discussed in this article; it also describes a specific movement begun by Betsy Greer as a way for crafters to make a difference locally and/or globally (for more information, please see Greer, 2011, and [craftivism.com](http://craftivism.com)). The mission of Church of Craft, begun by friends Tristy Taylor and Callie Janoff, is to promote value for all acts of making as they contribute to valuing humanness. Church of Craft has chapters in the US and the UK and values all acts of making ([churchofcraft.org](http://churchofcraft.org)). Stitch 'n Bitch is a global network of knitters and crocheters who meet in local chapters to talk while they create ([stitchnbitch.org](http://stitchnbitch.org)). Handmade Nation is an anthology, blog, film, and Facebook page organized by Faythe Levine that promotes handmade aspects of craft making as political (see Levine & Heimerl, 2008; Levine, 2009; [indiecraftdocumentary.blogspot.com](http://indiecraftdocumentary.blogspot.com); [www.facebook.com/Handmade.Nation](http://www.facebook.com/Handmade.Nation)). Revolutionary Knitting Circle was begun in Calgary by Anthea Black and Nicole Burisch, and promotes knitting as a radical alternative to the commodification of life (Robertson, 2011; Black & Burisch, 2011). The collective Anarchist Knitting Mob is a loosely-knit community of individuals living around New York City (see [anarchistknittingmob.blogspot.com](http://anarchistknittingmob.blogspot.com); Black & Burisch, 2011). Yarn bombing describes a type of graffiti accomplished with knitted or crocheted creations; yarn bombs are placed in public places (see [www.nytimes.com/2011/05/19/fashion/creating-graffiti-with-yarn.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/19/fashion/creating-graffiti-with-yarn.html?_r=0)) and also the book by the same name by Moore & Prain (2009). The blogging site Extremecraft.com from the northwest US brings together a wide range of DIY craft as art, craft, and subculture. Crafts for Critters (<http://craftsforcritters.org/home/>) supports animal welfare through the sale of crafts. Knittaplease is a yarn bombing group out of Texas led by Magda Sayeg (<http://www.magdasayeg.com>; [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Knitta\\_Please](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Knitta_Please)). Craft Hope was founded to share handmade crafts with people around the world who live in economically and materially challenged situations. The group forms partnerships with charities (see founder Jade Sims' (2010) book of the same name). Anti-factory.com is a clothing company that makes sweatshop-free apparel out of re-used materials (<http://www.stephaniesyjuco.com/antifactory/>). Microrevolt is a website that promotes knitting as a form of protest against sweatshops and low-waged female labor. They offer web applications that translate digital images into knitted ones (most notably corporate logos; [www.microrevolt.org](http://www.microrevolt.org)). Wombs on Washington was a project that involved placing knitted wombs on the steps of the US Supreme Court to support pro-choice legislation; patterns were circulated over the Internet (Robertson, 2011; see also [knitrchoice.livejournal.com](http://knitrchoice.livejournal.com)). Body count mittens, begun in 2005, memorialized US soldiers killed in Iraq; each mitten bore the date of a soldier's death and the number his or her death represented in the war (<http://www.craftsanity.com/pdf/mittenpattern.pdf>).

<sup>ii</sup> Participatory democracy is distinguished from protective democracy, based on the hegemony of a market economy; developmental democracy, based on elevating working-class people into self-interested consumers; and equilibrium or pluralist democracy, where apathy among the majority of citizens is crucial to a functioning society because participation is perceived as cumbersome (Torres, 1998, pp. 146-147).

<sup>iii</sup> For more historical depth on craft activism, Kirsty Robertson (2011) weaves together contemporary and historical artworks and movements, as well as citing some key writings.

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<sup>iv</sup> To see the umbrella-bat project, visit [www.marthastewart.com/946348/spooky-umbrella-bat-puppet](http://www.marthastewart.com/946348/spooky-umbrella-bat-puppet).

<sup>v</sup> The Slow Movement began with “Slow Food,” organized in Italy in the mid-1980s against McDonald’s and other fast food chains. It stressed local foods, cultural cuisines, and attention to making food as one of the rhythms of life. Other “Slow” movements later took hold: Slow Travel, Slow Design, Slow Sport, Slow Shopping, etc. Slow Movement stresses doing things at a pace right for that activity, at a deliberate pace.

<sup>vi</sup> For more information about *Whisper*, *The Waves*, *The Wind* and *The Crystal Quilt*, visit Suzanne Lacy’s website: [http://www.suzannelacy.com/1980swhisper\\_waves.htm](http://www.suzannelacy.com/1980swhisper_waves.htm) (*Whisper*) and [http://www.suzannelacy.com/1980swhisper\\_minnesota.html](http://www.suzannelacy.com/1980swhisper_minnesota.html) (*Crystal Quilt*).